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ABSTRACT

Comparing Maine to Appalachia, the author describes the similar educational problems related to school facilities, administrator and teacher attitudes, and practices. A discussion comparing American education to the English system notes the influence of Piagetian psychology and the importance of educational change beginning at the preschool level. A review of literature is given in sections devoted to (1) some issues and implications for the design of preschool programs for rural children, (2) a possible alternative to the current dilemma, (3) Open Education, (4) some goals for a preschool program, (5) classroom appearance and structure, and (6) the problem of evaluation. The last section describes the innovative Headstart program in Washington County, Maine, which is based on the concept of Open Education. In conclusion it is noted that, through implementation of such programs, a ripple effect may occur for changing Maine's education. (AN)

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This document is possible because so many gave so much, and the roots of the paper go back to my involvement in rural education in New Hampshire and in Appalachia. Many of my former students whose personal experiences are very much with me are the foundations for the philosophic position I now advocate.

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Without the kind support of the Washington County Headstart parents, the 1969 innovative Headstart program would not have been possible. The staff of the program deserves special consideration for their kindness and support in attempting the pilot program. Without the staff, we could not have demonstrated the feasibility of this program.

Above all, to the children we are deeply grateful, for they proved what we knew could and might be. They are our most precious gift, and it is our most profound obligation to cherish and nourish them so that they will become.

Lastly, this document is dedicated to the memory of all those children and youth who are no longer with us; they were our victims and time will judge us severely for what we have done to them. May this document influence us to prevent the continuation of what I have said on several occasions — Schools Are Killing Our Children.

The State of Affairs

Appalachia and northern New England share several common phenomena. As much as we New Englanders do not like the idea, nevertheless there is substantial evidence to support this view. Geographic isolation, socially closed communities, cultural lag, and large numbers of economically poor people predominate both regions. Our unwillingness to accept the fact that we have problems helps extend and perpetuate the prevailing conditions. In fact, this insistence that we are not an extended Appalachia has led to worsening conditions. In the early sixties, national attention to Appalachia created the shame/guilt complex which resulted in a vast amount of financial and human resources for that region. The Appalachians were only too willing to accept what they considered was long overdue them. The result today is a sharp increase in improved economic and educational facilities for that region and its people. Another added ingredient is also evident in Appalachia: its people wanted more and consequently they were and are willing to accept all the assistance available. But to reach this point, the Appalachians had to admit that problems were and are very much with them.

In visiting Maine schools, it is very evident that we have problems. And it is also evident that we are now beginning to reap the harvest of our bitter seed — a harvest which many Maine educators choose not to acknowledge. The fact remains that many of our children and youth are tuned-out and off from school and their performance while in school is far from what even traditional measures would consider acceptable. A large segment of our children are the forgotten children, and the way in which the schools deal with these children indicates just how unwilling the schools are to face the problems. These children receive brutal treatment, and even less consideration is given to their parents who help finance the prisons which their children attend. The evidence is also very clear that very few communities encourage or desire community participation in the schools. The result of this communication lag is disastrous and events of this past year in Maine indicate that the crisis is just beginning. The twenty-first century is nearly upon us, yet our schools reflect a continuing preoccupation with the first half of the twentieth-century. You cannot solve a problem until you first recognize that a problem exists. And this is our shame as educators, for we will not admit that problems do exist. Yet we know that large numbers of children are not very successful in school and we also know that not

many children like school. But few of us have asked ourselves why this is the state of affairs, and it appears that not many of us will ask this fundamental question.

There are several problem areas which contribute to the prevailingly poor conditions in Maine education, and the purpose of this document is to suggest those problems and to suggest some alternatives within the structure of an innovative preschool program. The fact that an innovative preschool program is selected does not limit the alternatives to just this aspect of the educational experience. Rather the innovative preschool program is a suggested model for the change of all education in Maine, for the heart of the issue is the prevailing narrowness which dominates most of what takes place in Maine schools.

The educational administration — always the brunt of attack — is the controlling power for change or lack of change. There are some of us who believe that the administration should be facilitating the teaching/learning process. On the other hand, administration as generally practiced here in Maine has as its primary goal — *maintenance*. By maintenance, we mean keeping what is; the prime consideration is a smoothly functioning system where there is far too much concern with how well the teachers discipline as opposed to how well teachers provide experiences for children. The second major consideration is the avoidance of any conflict even at the expense of suppressing teachers who attempt to make relevant experiences for their children. Balancing the budget, keeping everyone on a program, enforcing rules and regulations so that there will be no upset within the schools, and pleasing the communities are the major concerns of administration. Little consideration is ever given to children and to education. The administrator should be the prime force behind the blending of the schools and the communities with the major concern of promoting the growth of the communities.

Teacher attitude is another dimension to our current problems in Maine schools. Our teachers want to perform well, and they want children to grow and become. But given the prevailing conditions and attitudes of administration, such teachers soon become discouraged and apathetic, and many know that what they are doing is less than even adequate. But to adventure out into the unknown frequently spells loss of job and failure; there are not many teachers who want to take this route. Teachers have very little voice in what will be or not be in the schools. They have no voice in the decision-making

process, yet it is the teachers who are the closest to children and what children do. It is little wonder that many of our teachers fulfill the expectations of what administration wants; this is the only avenue where they receive any recognition for what they attempt each day. Many of our teachers are disillusioned, bitter, and filled with self-hatred. They reflect these feelings in working with our children and youth. Many who stay in Maine stay because they cannot go elsewhere. Many teachers try to help our children, but they are victims of their own rigid thinking. What they believe they are doing to help our children usually is not what we want or desire for our children. One of the major problems with Maine education is the problem of provincialness running rampant: too many teachers thinking and believing alike. Due to unfavorable salary programs many of our teachers just cannot afford to continue advanced degree study and expose themselves to new and different experiences. All these factors take their toll on our children and in our schools. Last, too many administrators are just not supportive or encouraging and teachers cannot perform without this essential ingredient. They need support, encouragement, and recognition. Too often their efforts go unrewarded.

Another major dimension is the problem of exposure to research and demonstration programs and an assessment of these two factors in terms of the needs of our children and schools. Too many teachers just do not know how or what to do; too many administrators are un-informed or poorly-informed. The end result is a disastrously narrow approach to teaching and to education. For some time we have known that so much of what is taking place in Maine schools is wrong. Not outdated — wrong. Yet, nothing is done. A teacher is both a scholar and a practitioner: a teacher is also a Humanist. In very few Maine schools will you ever find such an individual. Our children are consequently subjected to very narrow experiences, and teachers are always models. Leadership in Maine education is equally guilty, for wherever you find leadership, you find people attempting to discover how they support one another and how they are alike. Very infrequently is an opposing view or a different idea ever entertained. What we have is a simple case of in-breeding.

The major dimension confronting Maine education is the lack of awareness — an awareness that people and children are different and knowing how to effectively handle these differences. To be sure, many teachers and administrators talk about individual differences,

but their actions and the programs of the schools indicate little, if any, understanding of differences. Visits to Maine schools clearly indicate that as adults we would not particularly enjoy spending our time there each and every day. Insensitive treatment of children is one of the major problems in Maine schools. Children know who and what they are because our attitude is as it is. Part of the problem is now an awareness of the parents that their children are not accepted in school and that the school is doing little to create a feeling of worth.

Until we recognize the problems, there is not much that will take place to change what is going on in Maine schools. Yet, working in the opposite direction is a growing awareness on the part of parents that schools are against their children. If we educators do not act and act fast, Maine will shortly experience a growing revolution, for too many of our children just are not making it the way the schools say they must. It could be that the schools are wrong and not the parents and communities. And we are wrong when we say that there is only one way to learn, and this is essentially what we have been saying for years. Yet we know there are many alternatives, and this document suggests some considerations we should investigate.

Preface

One evening in April, we were having dinner with a couple at a genuine Roman villa in northern Wales. It was absolutely beautiful as the villa with all its courts, statues, and flowers nestled in a cove on the Irish sea. Pat and Dave Lewis are unusual people: he is a native Welsh with strong nationalistic feelings and involvements. She is a native of Yorkshire who had followed her husband back to Wales — a land long exploited and raped of its natural and human resources. Both are Cambridge-educated. They are building strong handcrafts as a means to revitalize the Welsh culture, tradition, and of course build nationalism. Their four-year-old son attends a local school (one-room, seventeen children, and a seventy-eight dollar yearly budget as allocated by the Ministry of Education) where bi-lingualism is taught with pride and deep commitment. My wife and I recurrently drew parallels to our native state of Maine, for the similarities are striking.

During the course of dinner Pat asked what was and is the dominant new trend in American education. I responded — Piaget. She replied — "My God, that's old hat here; we are way beyond that point." I was stunned, especially after immersion in Piaget for a year

at the Graduate School of Education, Harvard where I was involved on an independent study/travel award, The Ford Foundation. I was working on the problem of language development and reading especially as the problem relates to rural children. During my experiences at Harvard, I became involved indirectly in the Harvard Preschool Project which was a natural sequence of events when one works with child language and reading. Naturally, Pat's comment stunned me; I could not respond, nor could my wife. Several weeks later, back at Harvard, I suddenly saw what I think Pat meant by her statement. And if what I think is so, then I believe we are, indeed, entering an exciting age — a great new frontier in education as well as American culture.

Essentially, Open Education (the term will become self-explanatory) is infused and permeated with Piagetian psychology in the English school system. It is for this reason we see little dichotomy between low socio-economic background children and the traditional middleclass background children. I realize I am on dangerous grounds with this statement, but observations would indicate that this assumption is true. Whether it is Leicestershire, the Soho district of London, the rural one-room schools of Wales, you simply are not aware of the vast cultural gap which does, in fact, run rampant in our American schools as illustrated by the practice of tracking our children. This does not suggest that there is not a problem in Britain, for there is. It is really our major hang-up in American education, but not for the British schools. What surprised us during our visits to English schools is the total lack, at least in infant and primary education, of this sharp division which is almost at crisis stage in our schools. Another fact should be noted: English schools have been involved in Open Education since 1944. I also would like to propose that Piaget, in a very real sense, led to Open Education. Of course, he did not personally, but it has been his influence in understanding children which led educators to make attempts at alternatives — alternatives which we have not even begun to think about here in Maine for our children. It should, however, be noted that Open Education is not necessarily the dominant approach in English infant education, but it is prevalent and a growing mode for the English schools and for obvious reasons.

We can learn from the English school model: reforms in English education began and still continue in the infant schools. Those schools with reforms in the direction of Open Education are now experiencing good success with their older children, and it has led to

the abandonment of the eleven-plus examinations – essentially a deeply-rooted tracking system – and the construction of modern multi-directional comprehensive secondary schools. Because of our cultural pressure in a tight and highly structured technological society with over-emphasis upon higher education (for all the wrong reasons), we attempt reforms on the secondary school level first, and of course with little success. What we have done amounts to patchwork quilting: add a little here, take away from there and hope we are creating innovations. Much of our recent turmoil in both secondary and higher education is the direct result of our inability to implement reforms consistently and meaningfully, starting at one end of the dimension. Sensing this problem leads me to believe that we have to attack the problem at its roots – the preschool – and work to create consistent reforms from that point upward. I believe this is a valid observation, especially if one places our problems in context with the English school system.

Some Issues and Implications for the Design of Preschool Programs for Rural Children

Basically, the English school system avoids the socio-economic problems by providing *alternative strategies for learning,* and this is the heart of the issue. The British do so through Open Education, with strong emphasis upon Piagetian psychology. In America, one only has to read much of the research literature to realize what problems we have created. It appears we keep digging the hole larger and larger without application of some fundamental principles to close the gap – a gap which can and must be closed. This is a harsh statement, but if we review some of the literature, I believe the point is well-taken.

Gerald Lesser ("Mental Abilities of Children in Different Social and Cultural Groups," *Cooperative Research Project* #1635, U. S. Office of Education) demonstrates that the study really examines the effects of three independent variables – social class, cultural background, and sex of the child. In terms of social class differences, Lessser reports that children whose parents are members of the professions generally score about twenty points higher on the Stanford-Binet than those children whose parents are unskilled laborers. He also reports that while higher-status children show superior scores for all variables, social class differences are greatest for the *verbal, word-fluency,* and *number variables.* There were less striking differences for space, rea-

soning, and memory. Of course, there is an explanation for this trend, but little is done about it in educational programs. For instance, Basil Bernstein illustrates that lower class people tend to use informal language and mainly to convey concrete needs and immediate consequences; it is essentially a culture of *nowness* — immediate gratification. Middleclass people tend to be more formal, diversified, and flexible, with emphasis upon the relationships among concepts. As Lesser suggests, and fundamental to Bernstein's work, the verbal limitations of lower-class children are only in part due to vocabulary deficiencies; that is, a deficiency when that vocabulary is compared with middleclass culture. For the lower-class child that vocabulary is perfectly adequate for their culture as long as they remain within that cultural setting. Second, verbal limitations also arise from unfamiliarity with language patterns used in drawing verbal analogies, organizing a sequence of verbalized ideas, and communicating effectively. This is one major area where Maine children have their greatest problems when they are tested on standardized tests or college board entrance examinations. But none of this is to suggest that it is now impossible to develop these learning strategies for lower-class children, which is Bernstein's point as a sociolinguist and about which we have done little in our educational programs here in America.

Lesser's study reports that in terms of cultural background, the superiority of whites (the study involved Blacks, Chinese, Puerto Ricans, and Jews) is most marked in the areas of spatial perception and abstract thought; in linguistic and verbal tests it is significantly less and in rote memory differences disappear. But as Lesser points up, we really do not know whether the observed differences are a function of real variations among social class and cultural groups or reside in the characteristics built into the tests used to study the differences. Lesser's hypothesis is that cultural influences differ not only in *degree* but in *kind*, with the consequence that different kinds of intellectual skills are fostered in various environments. And this is the crucial point, for we need to know what intellectual skills come from what cultural environments. Our present approach is to assume that all socio-cultural groups must conform to the culture of the middleclass America. We say we provide in our educational programs for individual differences, but we then proceed to measure all children with standardized tests — tests which incorporate in their structure skills basically middleclass in nature.

The real problem in terms of Lesser's study is what we have done with it. The lines of differences are only scored deeper into the division which we have created, and we have ignored one of the basic pleas which Lesser makes. He maintains that we must be able to identify relative intellectual strengths *within* an individual, and we must be able to identify his individual intellectual strengths no matter what his cultural or socio-economic identity. We give lip service to this concept, but we do not construct programs and testing devices to allow for this practice. Of course, one of the obvious methods to pursue is Open Education with its infusion of Piagetian principles.

It is much the same story in Hertzig, Birch, Thomas, Mendez ("Class and Ethnic Differences in the Responsiveness of Preschool Children to Cognitive Demands", *Monographs: Society for the Research in Child Development).* As the authors point up, many studies demonstrate that the origin of unsuccessful learning styles in children from nonwhite, working-class backgrounds must be sought in early childhood and in the preschool years. They also suggest that very few studies address themselves directly to defining *stylistic* differences in cognitive behavior among social and ethnic groups in the preschool years. Most studies have avoided a consideration of behavioral style in response to cognitive demand and the studies have focused on achievement. Of course, that focus on achievement is always in terms of what the middleclass child can do. They suggest that more concern should be placed on *how well* rather than *how* the children function. I believe that both are equally important, but the problem is not to measure how the children perform in terms of middleclass performance measures, but rather in terms of a larger context of the nature of learning. What we need is a descriptive guide to the nature of learning, and Piaget provides precisely this type of descriptive guide. But it is only the beginnings of a descriptive guide, and we should never assume it to be complete — a tendency which we frequently practice. In this study, the authors report that in the preschool years native American middleclass and Puerto Rican working class children differ from each other in the behavioral styles with which they respond to demands for cognitive functioning. For instance, it was found that the preponderant response in both groups of children to cognitive demands was to work. However, despite the fact of this common tendency, the proportion of work responses is significantly higher in the middleclass children. Much of this is directly related to cultural

values and especially to goal expectations. One can relate this directly to Bernstein's study of language; lower-class children are rooted in the here and now, and they expect immediate pay-off. Their culture places little or no value on long term objectives and goals. If the children see no immediate pay-off, they quit the task. This same pattern is true of the Passamaquoddy Indians of Maine. But this does not suggest that these children are incapable of long-term performance or that they are incapable of meeting the demands to work. It is the implicit conclusions and assumptions which we draw from these studies which lead us astray.

The Hess/Shipman Study (*Early Experiences and the Socialization of Cognitive Modes in Children*) again presents many of the same issues. They suggest that the behavior which leads to social, educational, and economic poverty is socialized in early childhood. In one sense, this is very true, and rural Maine or Appalachia is an example of this very process in action. But, in another sense, we can take exception to this idea, for the fundamental problem here is again a value judgment in terms of middleclass values. We look at the worth of an individual in terms of what he can do in relation to middleclassness; if we find him lacking in that comparison, we label him a failure. But there is that possibility he is not a failure; rather we have made him be a failure. We never accept the worth of the individual as an unique human being; we look for the competencies which he can ultimately bring to our highly technological society with the very deep assumption that he must produce sufficiently well enough to support and maintain himself, but on our terms — not his. If there is one single dilemma which we face, it is this fundamental problem. Each individual must maintain himself according to our middleclass values and his worth is only that worth which permits him to operate successfully in the context of our values. Perhaps one of the greatest examples of what can happen when we cast aside value judgment is David Holbrook's *English for the Rejected*. The quality of thought expressed by these children in their writings is as profound as any which we can possibly produce. Holbrook's thesis is direct and simple: the so-called "backward" children are not inferior beings, but they are in fact sensitive, perceptive, and full of deep feelings, ambitions, and capacities for making contributions to the human experience and culture. According to Holbrook, the "best way" to make them "literate", in the fullest sense, is by imaginative work; this aspect is well within the capacities of any teacher. And Washington County

Headstart Program, 1969, amply demonstrates that this can happen in Maine and in Maine's poorest county with its poorest children. Further, the major problem with "backward" children (which they are not) is that they feel rejected by the teachers, the school, and the society. And, of course, they are! Lastly, Holbrook maintains that the important part of our work with these children must be devoted to curing them of the effects of feelings of failure. I further maintain that we must in fact stop making them feel this way in the first place.

The Hess/Shipman Study further suggests that the real problem in the effects of cultural deprivation is a lack of cognitive meaning in the mother-child communication system. The Harvard Preschool Project extends this idea. Rightfully, Hess and Shipman suggest that the structure of the social system and the structure of the family shape communication and language and that language shapes thought and cognitive styles of problem-solving. The authors report that in the deprived-family context, this means that the nature of the control system which relates parent to child restricts the number and kind of alternatives for action and thought that are opened to the child. Such constriction precludes a tendency for the child to reflect, to consider, and to choose among alternatives for speech and action. But in a culture and a society where such alternatives are not necessary, there is little need to develop this type of relationship. Always, of course, we make parallels to middleclass values and the purposes for which we desire ultimate outcomes. It is very true, as Hess and Shipman report, that one of the features of the behavior of the working class mothers and children is a tendency to act without taking sufficient time for reflection and planning. Hess and Shipman label this "impulsive" behavior, and according to our standards, it is. I label it the "nowness culture" and it is deeply ingrained in the culture of the poor and part of the psychology of the poor. This phenomenon is deeply characteristic of Appalachians and of rural northern New England people. And it is easily understandable, for their world is the immediate now and a day-to-day existence. They cannot concern themselves with the future, for their prime consideration is living through this one day. The world of low-income groups is a world of immediate action with immediate pay-off. This single characteristic deeply affects children who enter an educational program where they are required to learn and build skills for later pay-off. These children simply fail to understand the necessity of building in reading readiness or simple math concepts which will yield later results.

According to Hess and Shipman, the meaning of deprivation is a deprivation of meaning; that is, a cognitive environment in which behavior is controlled by status rules rather than by attention to individual characteristics of a specific situation and one in which behavior is not mediated by verbal clues or by teaching that relates events to one another and the present to the future. Finally, this environment produces a child who relates to authority rather than to rationale; it produces a child who is not reflective in his behavior and for whom the consequences of an act are largely considered in terms of immediate punishment or reward rather than future effects and long-range goals. This is a major theme to which we will want to return and for various reasons.

One of our strong hang-ups is the problem and question of deprivation, as suggested previously. Of all the recent literature, this question comes most forcefully from Deutsch — Institute for Developmental Studies, Department of Psychiatry, New York Medical College. In *Reversing Deprivational Effects in the PreSchool Child,* Deutsch maintains that there is considerable evidence that the earlier and more systematic the positive intervention, the greater the reversibility of the negative effects. As Deutsch points up, the culture of low-class groups is a different one from the middleclass child. Specifically, there is the difference in time-orientation. In the school or in the middle-class family, time forms the boundaries for activities and operates as a pressure-source for task completion. Many children coming from low-income families are first exposed to time requirements when they enter school. Deutsch also suggests (of course, Ayer, sociologist at Berea College and Director for Council of the Southern Mountains of Appalachia for years supported this view) it is difficult for all people to span cultural discontinuities. The transition must have serious psychological consequences for the child and probably plays a major role in influencing his later perceptions of other social institutions as he is introduced to them. And of course this will always be the situation until we change our attitudes and our behavior.

Deutsch's major consideration is the child in relationship to the school which he enters. He maintains that the research evidence indicates that lower-class children have a considerably narrower range of language; these children are *retarded* in the development of auditory discrimination skills. And naturally, these skills, along with language, are necessary prerequisites for learning to read or for achieving successful experiences in school. Inherent to this is the

aspect that these children have no training in attentional focusing or sharpening. Consequently, Deutsch claims that a disproportionately large group of lower-class children enter the school situation so poorly prepared to produce what the school demands that initial failures are almost inevitable and the school experience becomes negatively rather than positively reinforced. The thought never occurs to anyone that perhaps we need to change the schools, not the child.

Throughout the literature, the initial and basic assumption is the need to create programs which will, in effect, change the child so that he can cope with a culture basically different from his culture. This is an assumption which we must question, and we must question it strongly and deeply. We are what Herbert Marcuse in *One-Dimensional Man* suggests; we are a one-sided people, a society which cannot and will not permit divergence and differences. We are living the unexamined life, so aptly described in Matthew Arnold's *The Buried Life*. We may recognize the duality between man and the society in which he lives; we cannot, however, force ourselves to create alternatives to permit this duality to exist in harmony with other contending forces. The easy solution is to suppress man and give all to the dominant ideas and patterns of the society — in America, this means we create middleclassness everywhere. The easy solution, so we think, is to make those, who fail to conform to our standards, conform; consequently, Indians of Maine must become other than they are. We are beginning to discover that this approach is not the answer either.

Robert D. Hess ("Early Education as Socialization", *Early Education/Current Theory, Research and Action*) recognizes that the cultural distance and status differential between home and classroom is considerable. Hess maintains that in order to be effective, the school must function not only as a socializing agent but as a "re-socializing agent". The school must find ways to deal with those sub-cultural influences upon learning styles which act in opposition to the learning and teaching climate of the classroom. The fundamental question is the distinction between permitting the sub-cultural influences which the child possesses to exist on his own terms or subverting the current school's methodology so that it is acceptable (outwardly) to the child in order to bring the child in line with what we believe desirable and acceptable. Certainly of all the issues, this is the major one confronting us, especially as we work with rural Maine children, and this issue covers the total gamut of the educational experience, whether it be the design of a preschool program

or construction of a new comprehensive secondary school. In actuality, this is what all the current turmoil is about, and talking about relevance and non-relevance is to only side-step the crucial issue.

A Possible Alternative to the Current Dilemma

Joseph C. Grannis ("The School as a Model of Society", *Harvard Graduate School of Education Association Bulletin)* zeros in on the problem sharply and clearly. According to Grannis, every school represents to its students a model of society and its possibilities (which is a frightening statement when you think about it). In the very composition of the students and teachers, in the authority and decision-making structure of the school, in the ways that people talk with one another, learn and work and play together, and in the expectations the schools hold for their students — in all these ways and more, the schools instruct the society. We traditionally believe that the content is the most important learning a school conveys to its children. But it is the structure of the school that instructs most systematically, and it is this structure that the children respond to first and remember longest. Kids learn the game; they either play it and play it well, or they drop-out. Our capacity to change the schools depends on our understanding not only what the schools teach about society now, but the process by which they came to represent various views of society. For this reason, so much of the research on the differences of middleclass children and lower socio-economic children is really an illustration that we are not going to confront the problem facing us. Always, the dominant theme is how to provide ways, methods, whatever you wish to label it, of helping the culturally different child to whom we attach the label disadvantaged achieve success in our way of playing the game.

As Grannis suggests so clearly — we know that the poor in our society are disadvantaged and that somehow inequalities in the schools attended by lower and middle class youth play a part in keeping them poor. Grannis suggests that the schools are too preoccupied with the accumulation and specialization of knowledge and skills; the school demonstrates too little concern with personal and social integration. Learning is presented to the children as a good to be hoarded for some future day. Sociologically, we know that the lower-class groups place little, if any, value upon future fulfillment of goal expectations. That is, we know this from direct observations and involvement with poor people, whether it be Appalachia or rural Maine.

These people live in a world of the here and now; we have never accepted or even understood this concept and there seems to be little willingness to accept or understand it. Our schools are a perfect example of how we fail to work through and with this problem. Basic to this whole concept is the total lack of any understanding or knowledge about the psychology of the poor. And research has done little to help us come to terms with this problem.

The "New Curriculum" is really the same old message in a new form, for always its main emphasis is the pouring of new quantities of knowledge into the schools for students to accumulate. One of the basic premises of the New Curriculum is that there are certain fixed structures of thought to be mastered in order to have knowledge. In the final analysis, we are all "disadvantaged", for we are displacing ourselves outside ourselves. We are really afraid to examine ourselves to discover the one fundamental basic fact — our own human condition. Until we do this, we are not going to develop any educational program worth anything. We have again a patchwork quilt, a group of hopefully quick cures. Of course, we are dishonest not only to ourselves but to all those children who represent a culture different from our culture, for we do not permit those children to exist on their own terms. We say that their environment is limited; we claim that the maternal interaction is inadequate; we say they do not honor time; we say a lot of idiocy, that is what we say, and the tragedy is that these children know it.

We have little option available to us; the time has come for us to face the cruel and simple facts that what we are doing is basically not only a disservice to ourselves (for it is dishonest) but for the children and ultimately to society.

Open Education

Philosophically, I must turn to Open Education as a vehicle for opening the unlimited possibilities of the human experience. Roland Barth (*Open Education*: *Assumptions About Learning and Knowledge*) opens some of these possibilities for us by defining some of the characteristics of learning, teaching, interactional processes of a child encountering the world.

1. Motivation:

   Children are innately curious and display exploratory behavior quite independent of adult intervention.

(Observations of children in action clearly support this assumption, and it is interesting to note that Piaget in defining some of the psychological principles used the observational method to do so.)

2. Conditions for Learning:

   The child will display natural exploratory behavior if he is not threatened.

   Confidence in self is highly related to capacity for learning and for making important choices affecting one's learning.

   Active exploration in a rich environment, offering a wide array of manipulative materials will facilitate children's learning.

   Play is not distinguished from work as the predominant mode of learning in early childhood.

   Children have both the competence and the right to make significant decisions concerning their own learning.

   Children will be likely to learn if they are given considerable choice in the selection of the materials they wish to work with and in the selection of the questions they wish to pursue with respect to those materials.

   Given the opportunity, children will choose to engage in activities which will be of high interest to them.

3. Social Learning:

   When more than one child is interested in exploring the same problem or the same material, they will often choose to collaborate in some way.

   When a child learns something which is important to him he will wish to share it with others.

4. Intellectual Development:

   Concept formation proceeds very slowly.

   Children learn and develop intellectually not only at their own rate, but in their own style.

   Children pass through similar stages of intellectual development . . . *each in his own way, and at his own rate and in his own time.*

   Intellectual growth and development take place through a sequence of concrete experiences followed by abstractions.

   Verbal abstractions should follow direct experiences with objects and ideas, not precede them or substitute for them.

(This is one of the major reasons why I believe the Bereiter and Engelmann preschool program fails to truly be a meaningful program for children. Everything is super-imposed upon the child; he learns "correct responses" to objects, but the objects never become conceptually internalized by the child nor does he have the opportunity to verbalize about the object on his terms and in his own time. Of course, the value judgments placed upon what the child is permitted to encounter in the program is also fundamentally a major problem with this approach.)

The preferred source of verification for a child's solution to a problem comes through the materials he is working with.

Errors are necessarily a part of the learning process; they are to be expected and even desired, for they contain information essential for further learning.

Those qualities of a person's learning which can be carefully measured are not necessarily the most important.

Objective measures of performance may have a negative effect upon learning.

If an individual is involved in and having fun with an activity, learning is taking place. Evidence of this learning is best assessed intuitively, by direct observation.

The best way of evaluating the effect of the school experience on the child is to observe him over a long period of time.

5. Assumptions About Knowledge:

The quality of being is more important than the quality of knowledge; knowledge is a means of education, not its end. The final test of an education is what a man *is*, not what he knows.

Knowledge is a function of one's personal integration of experience and therefore does not fall into neatly separate categories or "disciplines."

The structure of knowledge is personal and idiosyncratic, and a function of the synthesis of each individual's experience with the world.

It is questionable whether there is a minimum body of knowledge which it is essential for everyone to know.

It is possible, even likely, that an individual may learn and

possess knowledge of a phenomenon and yet be unable to display it publicly. Knowledge resides with the knower, not in its public expression.

If we accept these assumptions, it appears that we do cut through to the heart of the issue in the design of a preschool program. So much of the literature about compensatory education for the "disadvantaged" – although valuable to the degree that we thereby learn some of the characteristics of that group – really attempts to subvert that culture and the child in it to create a new culture for the child – a culture which may not necessarily be healthy or desirable. To cut across the span of cultural discontinuity should never imply or suggest that we change the child's first culture. Access from one culture to another suggests to me that we need to practice in essence a type of bi-lingual situation. Just as people can be bi-lingual or multi-lingual, so too can culture be bi-cultural or multi-cultural.

The problem inherent to all these issues is how to come to terms with the child and his culture; we short circut the process. We prefer to think in terms of making the child acceptable to what we believe is desirable and healthy in our society. For most of us, this means we have the terrible compulsion to make every child a middleclass child, for it is on this one avenue that we believe success to lie. David Hawkins (Thou-I-It – a talk given on 4/3/67 at the Primary Teachers' Residential Course, Loughborough, Leicestershire) offers us an alternative. He maintains that people do not amount to very much except in terms of their involvement in what is outside and beyond them. A human being is a localized physical body, but you cannot see him as a *person* unless you see him in his working relationships with the world around him. The more you cut off these working relationships, the more you put him in a box, the more you diminish him, figuratively and/or literally.

I submit that this is one of the major reasons why compensatory education is now in a terrible crisis stage, the assumption alone of what "compensatory" means dehumanizes the children for whom the program is intended. The root of the problem with Headstart, for instance, is the basic assumption it proposes. As Hawkins states, you cannot dissociate the person from the world he lives and functions in, yet in our "compensatory" programs this is precisely what we do. The problem is that a child's development will be limited and distorted if his development does not, by turns, explore both the personal and the non-personal aspects of his environment. Environment is the

key word. No compensatory program that I know of permits the entrance of the child's environment. Such programs presuppose that the environment is not acceptable as it is, and therefore concentration is placed on creating a new and different environment. Eric Erickson (*Childhood and Society*) argues for basically the same concept. As he points up, as the child's radius of awareness, coordination, and responsiveness expands, he meets the educative patterns of *his* culture, and thus learns the basic modalities of human existence. In a compensatory program, we never permit the child first to learn completely the basic modality of his *first* cultural environment; we rip him out by the roots from that environment and attempt a transplant into a new and different culture. As Erickson suggests, ultimately children become neurotic not from frustrations, but from the lack or loss of societal meaning in these frustrations.

Some Goals for a Preschool Program

There are certain basic and, indeed, global goals which could and should be part of a preschool program, but modification is always significant. That is, we must alter the goals to meet the specific requirements of the group of children for whom they are intended. This is especially important in relationship to groups which are culturally different. Sears and Dowley ("Research in Teaching in the Nursery School," *Handbook of Research on Teaching*) offers a suggested series of these goals:

1) meeting organic needs and establishing patterns of self-maintenance;
2) learning motor skills, and confidence for self-exploration which affects the development of motor skills;
3) developing manipulatory skills — because while learning to internalize, the child also has to encounter the world and he does that through manipulation; the manipulation, however, should be on the child's own terms and at his own pace;
4) learning control and restraints, our major problem here being the assessment of the type and kind of control necessary, since we cannot impose middleclass value judgments concerning control and restraint on this child who is not middleclass;

5) developing appropriate behavior – the major problem here is finding the fine line between individualism and socially acceptable behavior;
6) psychosexual development;
7) language development;
8) intellectual development.

In implementing these goals, much has been said about "readiness," especially as it relates to reading. If we have a hang-up in American education, it is surely the concept of readiness; in terms of any educational program, readiness is a basic and underlying concept. James L. Humes, Jr. (*Before the Child Reads*) offers some insights into the problem. For him, readiness means that the child has developed enough so that the required "brain power, thinking power, memory power, seeing power, muscle power" – whatever the task requires – are his. Readiness means: "now the child is in the best position to learn." Now the child can learn efficiently, without waste of time or energy or motion. Readiness is, basically, arriving at essential conditions; earlier was too soon. The whole concept of "building readiness" is an absurd contradiction in terms. Our primary responsibility is to begin with all the readiness that exists. Open Education underscores this basic premise, and certainly this is one of the major reasons why Open Education in Britain is so successful. Rather than imposing an extrinsic structure, it is arranged that children come to tasks as they can perform them. Almost as important: a child is permitted to attempt any task even though he is not ready to carry it through successfully; never is there a value judgment placed on a child's unsuccessful completion of a task.

Given the basic philosophic assumptions and the extensive goals, it is now necessary to place these two aspects of education into a context from which the curriculum will emerge. This is a process essential to the construction of a meaningful preschool program. What we cannot do is to construct a rigid curriculum in a vacuum and impose it arbitrarily upon the children. It has been frequently stated that the curriculum ties the school and the society together. What is more important is that the curriculum serve as a process by which children *become,* and for each child this is a different process. There are certain inherent qualities which should be a part of any preschool program and which should determine the character of the curriculum. For an illumination of these, I believe we have to turn to Piagetian psychology.

Celia S. Lavatelli ("A Piaget-Derived Model for Compensatory Preschool Education," *Early Childhood Education Rediscovered,* J. L. Frost, editor) offers a point of view which I believe to be a vital part of the total process. The basic philosophic assumptions and the Piagetian principles infuse the total curriculum.

Essentially, the individual constructs his own curriculum. Stimulation via sensory-motor system early in life is the key to intellectual development — and perhaps I should clearly state again that the purpose of such intellectual development is not to impose cultural values that will change the values already emerging in the child's mind. This is one of the great problems confronting the Passamaquoddy Indians as it has in the past and still does confront and frustrate the French Canadians of Maine. Perhaps we can view Open Education and Piaget principles as applicable universally, to any cultural group, as well as being the true substitute for "compensatory" education. Somehow it does appear that this approach is fundamentally more honest and open: basic to all development is stimulation; stimulation leads to action, and from actions develop mental structures of schemes for dealing with other stimuli perceived as similar. In a very real sense, the capacity of a child at any later age to benefit from instruction (using the word in its fullest ramifications) hinges upon mental structures previously developed. As Piaget maintains, beginning at birth, intelligence develops as the child interacts with objects and events in the environment. Certainly stimulation plays a dominant role in creating possibilities for this interaction. In this light, emphasis should be placed upon *transactional* experiences rather than perceptual; activities should be available where the child can operate upon the data to which he is exposed, and not merely note likenesses and differences or changes as a result of actions. This process of operating directly upon the data occurs very infrequently in Maine schools, and is not likely to occur until we can change teaching habits and administration attitudes toward the teaching-learning process.

Lovatelli maintains that rather than attempting to teach specific responses through reinforcement techniques, teachers should set the stage for concept acquisition through equilibration, acting only to call the children's attention to dissonant information and to ask children to justify their responses. In cognitive development, children must have ample opportunity to make generalizations; teachers should look for opportunities for combining, ordering, conserving, etc., as the children engage in whatever is going on.

Sonquist and Kami ("Applying Some Piagetian Concepts in the Classroom for the Disadvantaged," *Early Childhood Education Rediscovered*) explore more deeply the problem of cognitive development. One of their main premises is that the basic function of the preschool is facilitating the transition from sensory-motor intelligence to conceptual intelligence in order to build a strong foundation for future growth. The two specific ways to effect this transition are symbolization and mastery of elementary types of relationships. They maintain that the preschool is not primarily for the purpose of helping the child extend his experience quantitatively, but rather to help him integrate and elaborate experiences for the development of the intelligence. But it is more than just the development of the intelligence; it is the development of the total child as a human being coming into awareness of his uniqueness and as a participant in the human experience. Sonquist and Kami make a strong point that there is a limited amount of time each day and so much learning to be done; consequently every item in the environment and every activity during the school experience should be especially selected for its contribution to the learning process.

In this light, there are several specific cognitive activities which should be implicit to any program. The first concerns the development of symbolization which is broken into three areas — the symbol, the sign, and the index. The symbolic process must be developed (if possible) during the preschool years and through the pre-verbal levels so that eventually the "signs" (words) will evoke vivid and meaningful mental images. To develop proper symbolization, the child must first gain a thorough familiarity with the objects themselves, and, of course, this is a vital and integral part of Open Education. At the "index" level, the child gradually becomes capable of constructing whole objects even when be perceives only fragmentary parts. Representation at the "symbol" level includes five types of non-verbal representation which have in common the evocation of mental images. The five types are the use of the body to represent objects (imitation), the use of objects to represent other objects (make-believe), the use of utterances to characterize objects (onomatapoeia), the recognition of pictures as representing real objects, and the making of representations in two and three dimensions. Representation at the "sign" level (words) comes after the two following representations have taken place on the pre-verbal level. Language, of course, is used at the two previous levels, and the child who has had a variety of pre-verbal symbolic experiences

will be able to create a mental image when he hears the teacher's words. This is a crucial area for rural children and for children from different language backgrounds. Essential at this stage is the child's need of language to understand not only concepts, but also to retrieve and express them. This is a problem with the Indian children and with the culturally different children of Maine. Without the language developments, the concepts are almost impossible to retrieve and their expression is equally difficult for these children.

The next level of cognition is elementary types of relationships. In the beginning, relationships are difficult for children to learn because they require the abstraction of connections among objects and events. For middleclass children, this process begins early in the home with the efforts of the parents; for lower-socio-economic children, where the culture is of the here and now, this process does not take place as readily or as frequently. There are two kinds of elementary relationships — logico-mathematical and spatio-temporal. Logico-mathematical relationships include grouping (pre-classification) and ordering (pre-seriation). Not only should the child have opportunities to talk about these concepts, but also the child should be given meaningful opportunities to use them so the words will have meaning. The structure of materials, no matter how limited the environment, is one of the ways to develop logico-mathematic relationships. In fact, for rural children and for the culturally different child, it is far better not to cluster too much within that environment in the beginning. What structure is provided should be items from the child's immediate environment; for Washington County children, such items as pieces of lumber with hammer and nails, pine cones, rocks, tin cans, etc. all serve to start this process but at the same time to create a feeling of familiarity. In spatio-temporal relationships, the child is exposed to experiences involving space and time. Materials directly out of his environment can be used to teach these concepts. There are three basic ways to bring the integration about: 1) the manipulation of the environment to induce the child to "discover" the desired learning; 2) the manipulation of the environment to make "discovery" inevitable; 3) direct teaching. Open Education uses all three approaches, but vital to all approaches is use of the child's special interests and the familiar materials in his world.

Curriculum really emerges from basic philosophy, goals, and teaching strategies. Much has been said about materials and environment, and rightfully so. In constructing a program for the culturally different child, the question of values is also paramount; considering his envir-

onment, what direction do you want to send him in? We do not want —and this is one of the major themes of this paper — to displace his own cultural values, arbitrarily, with others. What we can hope to create for him is opportunity — opportunity to develop in his own way and in the context of his environment. Open Education with the application of Piagetian principles within the context of the child's world creates the curriculum. We must restore to the child's school environment his own environment. One of the basic problems with all compensatory education is the sharp shift from the child's world into a middleclass world of school where he is bombarded with so much stimuli that he cannot internalize much of it.

If the child cannot internalize the school environment, he is soon alienated from it, with the result that he has little or no success in developing his learning strategies. The fact that we devalue the child's own home environment also lowers his confidence and learning power. We devalue that environment instead of using it because we assume it lacks all the prerequisites for learning, but this is not the case at all. That world is rich, in spite of what appears by our standards to be impoverishment. We need to employ all there is in that world for the development of materials; to this we need to apply the Piagetian principles which promote strategies for learning. It is in this way that we can create what I previously called a bi-cultural world for the child; just as in the bi-lingual world, the child can pass from one culture to another and back again, with the option always open to the child. For instance, at the moment we are constructing a whole language/reading series for the primary grades based on the world of the children; this world involves the sea and the land around it. The materials include what children have said and done and the names of children actually involved. Not only does this make the materials relevant, it also creates an atmosphere in which the self-image can grow.

What Might the Classroom Look Like?

What might such a preschool class be like if we followed such a program? Joseph Featherstone *(The Primary School Revolution in Britain)* captures the tone and direction of Open Education in Britain, and our personal experience visiting those schools for Open Education parallels Featherstone's description. For instance, there would be very little organized activity for a whole class to do together. Most of the children would be on their own, moving about and talking quite freely. The teacher sometimes sits at her desk and the children flock to her for

assistance. More often she moves about the room, advising on projects when asked, listening to children read, asking questions, giving words, talking, and sometimes prodding. The teacher plays a multi-dimensional role, unlike the traditional role of American teachers. The classes are noisy and the school day is open; there are options; the teacher permits the children to decide how they will spend the day. The teacher lists the different activities available and then allows the children to make additions to the list. The basic ground rule is that the children must clean up, and they must not bother others unless they are invited to join in. The "family" or "vertical" plan is an intrinsic part of Open Education: it involves children teaching children. Classes contain a cross-section of different age groups. This is a vital part of the proposed preschool program. The age span would go from two to six. Piaget advances the idea that children learn to think in stages; in the early stages they learn mainly from the testimony of their senses and not so much through words. What is highly important here is the age mix where older children help the younger advance through the stages. An additional dimension that is rarely taken into consideration is the fact that the younger children help the older children test their assumptions. Implicit always is the need to permit children to talk. Piaget *(Language and Thought)* reinforces this concept that children make better intellectual progress when they can speak freely about what they are doing, and when the teacher is ready from time to time with appropriate terms of speech and questions.

From all that has been said, it is obvious that a classroom should offer myriads of rich activities to choose from, but that these activities and the materials for them should come in part (certainly in the beginning of the preschool program) from the children's environment. Just as a child verbalizes his speech before it becomes internalized, so is it essential for the child to have ample opportunities to repeat activities over and over. The stress, fundamentally, should be on helping a child learn to think. Or, to state it another way, provide for the children strategies that will help them to learn. Whether we like to admit it or not, we can never do the learning for the child; it is the child who must do it, and he learns in his own idiosyncratic fashion. When acting merely as information-giver, we are not really teaching, for teaching can only be measured in and to the degree that a child manifests behavior that he has learned. Even this is questionable as true evaluation.

The Problem of Evaluation

The real problem with evaluation is precisely this problem of how to measure what we believe are learned behaviors which we think we have taught. I question all standardized tests; I question them because they cannot reflect the divergent and idiosyncratic behavior of each child being tested. Much of the controversy concerning compensatory education has been this problem of applying standardized tests as the sole means of determining how much the children have gained. First, there is a wide discrepancy between the test items and how they are constructed in relationship to the children being tested. This is a major problem in terms of the operational behavior of these children as they behave within their culture as opposed to the operational behavior of middleclass children. There is no escaping the fact that the standardized tests do reflect basically a middleclass operational pattern.

In terms of evaluation, given all we know about testing, and recognizing that there is a vast area of unknowns, we still can chart learned behavior. We can, that is, given that we develop the evaluation ourselves. This does not suggest that standardized tests will not or should not be used; they should, but only as a gauge, as a reality-tester of one kind to check what we think we are developing for learned behavior. But to determine the success or failure of our preschool program on the basis of a Stanford-Binet is unfair, unfair to the children and unfair to the program.

We need to develop a check-list of specific behaviors for each area of our program — socio-motor development, language, cognitive growth, including concept formation, and so on. The teacher will use the check list before the program begins, half way through, and at the conclusion. It is essential to test and evaluate at least half way through the program as a reflection or mirror to see if the children are indeed demonstrating any manifestations of what we specify as the learned behavior. It is highly improbable that we would use standardized tests because each preschool program would be designed for the specific group for which it is intended (though I believe that there are certain universals which can be part of every program). The diversity of cultural groups is also a factor to consider: by developing evaluation techniques for a specific program, we do overcome the difficulties of global measurement/evaluation.

Another dimension to the problem is having other professionals involved in the program (not just the one teacher) test the learned behaviors. This serves the purpose of insuring some description of the

program and its effectiveness; second, it permits us to write diagnostic/remedial prescriptions for each child and the group, if need be. Another value to this approach is the opportunity to observe children in action; we do precious little in this area. What we discover may be highly relevant to what we think we are doing. Frequently we believe a child has not performed because the test indicates he has not. In actuality, the child could have performed in several dimensions we simply have not realized. In "Analysis of Selected Language Samples of Maine Children" (forthcoming in *Journal of Reading Specialists* and appeared in April, 1969 *Childhood Education,* research abstract — Vincent P. Skinner), I learned far more about what children do than any test could ever tell me. A test item may indicate that a child illustrates no spacio-temporal relationships; but in actuality, the child may, in fact, have very detailed understandings of these relationships, but within his context, not the test's. Sometimes it is that the test item is so constructed as to not detect this learned behavior. For example, Deutsch and Brown in *Social Influences in Negro-White Intelligence Differences* suggest that their studies illustrate the I.Q.'s of children with fathers in the homes are always higher than those who have no fathers in the homes. Of course, the I.Q. measurement in relation to the cultural group is one problem, but what is significant is the fact that children from fatherless homes are not necessarily less bright. It could be that these children develop a different learning strategy to accommodate their life-style, and in fact they do. This is a proveable assumption through the observations of these children in action. But an I.Q. test is not going to tell us that. We just have not observed enough different situations to accommodate all the varieties of human behavior manifested in the various cultural groups.

Innovative Headstart, Washington County, Maine

The Washington County Headstart Parent Committee expressed in April, 1969 that they desired a Headstart program which would provide for their children opportunities — opportunities for growth and for success within a structured educational program. They desired a program which would permit their children to learn strategies of how to learn as well as a program which would accept their children. So much of what has happened in traditional Headstart programs is the basic concept of compensatory education and enrichment. The parents objected to this idea, for underlying the concept is the rejection of the child as he is. Too, the parents wanted a voice in the selection of

the program, the staff, and the operation of the centers. And this is as it should be, for if education is to be meaningful, it must include parent participation. Significantly, parents can and do make meaningful decisions when they are given the opportunity to do so. But, and this is the crucial point, the parents need information in order to make these decisions. What we did in Washington County was to present all the available options and let the parents make the decisions. The sucsess of this approach is overwhelming, for in each case, the parents displaced their personal interests in favor of their children.

What the parents elected for a program was a combination of Open Education, Piagetian applied principles, and the Harvard Preschool Project. The parents especially liked the concept of Open Education, for it permitted their individual children to progress through a series of learning experiences at their own rate and at their individual level of competency. Too, Open Education permitted acceptance of the culture from which the children came, and this was especially meaningful for the Indian children involved in the program. Essentially, each child could pass from one stage to another when he expressed an interest and desire. Never in the program was there total group instruction with the teacher acting as information-giver. Consequently, when one visits a center, one sees a wide range of activities in progress and a wide range of observable competencies. Some children are far more advanced than others, but each child is involved in the particular stage necessary for him to master before he can undertake new levels of difficult activities. An interesting dimension to this process is the adaptability of teachers to work within a wide range of diverse learning activities all taking place at the same time within the same classroom.

The Harvard Preschool Project is a research project with its basic purpose of giving us a description of what the preschool child looks like and what he can do. Strange as this may sound, until very recently we really have known little or nothing about preschool children. The project's main focus was and is a description of this child and what makes this child exceptional-intellectually, socially, and emotionally. To find out just what a three-year old child can do, the Project's researchers recorded hundreds and hundreds of children as they interact within their homes and with each other. By doing so, there is now a list of abilities, and if a child can perform these tasks at age three, his chances for success are very high. What we now label as an "exceptionally competent 3-year-old" — that is, a child who is very verbal and who

scores high in 17 abilities — will be an average, all-American child ten years from now. That is, if we apply learning strategies which permit children to develop these 17 abilities. To name a few of them: a competent child can demonstrate "dual focus," in other words he can attend to his original task and at the same time tune in on what is going on around him, and yet still perform his original task successfully. This child can sense dissonance or discrepancy. He can anticipate consequences. He can deal with abstractions, make interesting associations, plan and carry out a sequence of activities, and make effective use of resources. This child, socially, demonstrates pride in his accomplishment which leads to the development of a self-image; he can make believe, and he can express affection and hostility.

How does a three-year-old child become competent? Once deciding the factors which create the competent child, the Harvard Preschool Project then searched to discover what it was within that child's environment which permitted him to obtain the abilities listed above. In each case the researchers discovered that it was the quality of the interaction between the child and his mother and his immediate world that made the difference. In essence, the competent three-year-old was competent because he thrived and developed within a home environment much like the environment of Open Education. The competent child was not that child whose mother pushed him beyond what he could do, and he was not the child whose mother and immediate environment provided little or no interaction. In terms of education, this means that if we use the traditional educational philosophy of group teaching and use teachers as mere information-givers, we will not help the child develop these all-important abilities. This is probably why we have so many "failures", especially among those children from a culturally different world, who need to have the freedom to explore, to test, to interact, and talk about what they are doing. Yet, how many first-grade classes provide for this type of activity? Not many, if any. In fact, for rural regions, one finds that the primary grades are very tightly structured with great emphasis placed on making the child "behave": to be "good" and "do as teacher tells you". And this is precisely the reverse of what should be happening in those classrooms. In rural environments or in environments where children come from lower socio-economic backgrounds, the culture of that world provides little opportunity for the child to be expressive. In fact, it is often an environment which places a premium upon how well-disciplined the child is. Consequently, this is all the more reason why those first few

years of school should provide an environment where these children can learn to develop these abilities. The Harvard Preschool Project is one of the strongest arguments for a change in our educational system. In terms of the Passamaquoddy Indian children who have a long record of failure in school, this argument is especially strong and speaks directly to the issue of why these children "fail" in school. I cannot and do not accept the concept that these children cannot learn; they can and do learn, but they cannot learn when they enter an educational system which is so alien to their world and to their performance skills. Yet this is exactly what we demand they do.

Can the children make significant amounts of progress within the program outlined in this position paper? The answer is overwhelmingly yes. At this moment, we have some Indian five-year olds who are beginning to read and write. But these children are not using a basal reading program which is traditional in our schools. They are cutting out pictures, labelling them, attaching the initial sounds of the letter to create the word, and then creating a series of these pictures to create their own stories. The progress of these children is overwhelming, especially when you consider the fact that they have been in Headstart seven weeks. If this much progress can be made in seven weeks, think what would happen in a year program for these children.

To implement the Headstart program for Washington County, we held a three-day pre-service program for the staff, including teachers, teacher aids, social aids, and all interested parents. The participation was excellent. The pre-service program was intensive, of necessity; we just did not have the time. The program stressed Open Education and how it works; it stressed Piagetian principles and what this means in educational programs; it stressed the findings of the Harvard Preschool Project. Dr. E. Robert LaCross and Mrs. Frances Litman of Harvard Preschool Project worked on the pre-service program with me. Always, we hit at attitudes and how attitudes make for success or failure in children learning. At the same time, we stressed how a concept works. That is, if we have a structured classroom with diverse types of activities, we translated how a teacher, a teacher aid, a mother, or a social aid can use that activity to help build these abilities of competency. Mrs. Ada Graham assisted in this aspect of the program, and she helped us place emphasis on how we can and must use the environment of the child as it presently exists. This is significant, for too frequently we say we cannot bring

an innovation into the region for it costs money. We used very little manufactured preschool equipment; it just is not necessary. We have all the equipment we need within our immediate environment and we demonstrated how to use that equipment to help build these seventeen identified basic skills which make the child a competent performer. Pine cones, rocks, sand, pieces of driftwood, lumber, old tires, kitchen utensils, newspaper, old rags, tin cans, yarn, etc., are all vitally important in permitting the child to explore in order to build these skills. Implicit to all this process was and is the very necessary process of extending language development through verbalization. Children must talk, that is, talk out their ideas; until they talk, they cannot develop concepts and abstractions. They must go from the concrete to abstract; verbalization is a primary key in this process.

Directly following the three-day pre-service program, each center began the design of its own individual program. The centers (Columbia Falls, Lubec, Pleasant Point Indian Reservation, and Peter Dana Reservation) began simply and directly. The first week, the staff did not overwhelm the children with all the possibilities. They began the process of assessing the children, discovering which child was where in the scheme of the 17 basic abilities. Then, after the assessment was completed, the staff began to introduce those activities prerequisite for the child to acquire these skills. Never were cultural attitudes of the children rejected. Nor were the children ever censored in their language; that is, grammatically, a child was never corrected. If a child gave a grammatical utterance which was non-standard English, the teacher repeated the statement. If the child said, "I ain't got none", the teacher would say, "no, I haven't any." The quickest way to effectively stop a child from verbalizing is to censor his language. When you do this, you are in essence telling the child that his language and his family's language is not acceptable to you or to the school. Among the Passamaquoddy Indians this is a very severe problem, for always their English is "corrected" and then we wonder why they have problems in using language effectively and fluently.

Part of the program included intensive use of the environment to create the world of make-believe. All the art work produced by the children is original; they were never given pre-instructions to create a specific item. Rather, they created and used color as they desired. Observation of the centers will clearly indicate that these children have a profound sense of color and creativity; as well, the

art captures the drama of their lives and their world. Rocks, pine cones, driftwood became transformed into hundreds of other items. And this is as it should be.

All the children were provided with opportunities for family-style meals and the introduction of new foods. An interesting observation is that during the second week of the program we started serving breakfasts to the children. In three centers we noticed a sharp decline in mid-morning uneasiness and irritable behavior. We concluded that many of our children came to Headstart without breakfast. By providing breakfast we noted an increase in physical activity and energy.

To make the program work, you must be supportive of teachers and staff. That is, teachers are uncomfortable with change and introduction of new ideas. They need support, encouragement, time, and understanding. Consequently, each day we visited at least one center at which time we participated directly in the program, interacting with the children and the staff. The staff was unsure in the beginning of the program. That is, how do you provide freedom for exploration within a structured environment but not use the techniques of group instruction? As the children began to express delight and happiness, the teachers began to gain confidence in what they were doing. Rapidly, we noted a sharp increase in the rapport between the children and the staff. We saw trust, love, security, happiness, and familiarity begin to emerge. The staff grew through this experience, and it is our strongest hope that this coming school year, they will attempt to provide this approach in their classroom. But if the school administration is not supportive, these teachers will not. With the exception of one teacher, all the teachers for Washington County Headstart teach in the immediate region. And of course, we hope that this will create a ripple effect for change in our Maine schools.

We can bring change, but meaningful change to Maine education. In the final analysis, if we dream, we create. For children we have frequently prevented them from enjoying this essential and magnificent ingredient of the human experience. Erik Erickson (*Childhood and Society*) makes a distinction between art as participation and art as observation. For the creating and growing society, children must dream; they must participate in the world directly and essentially art is the vehicle (the broadest meaning of the word) for new dimensions to the human experience. The plea is to permit our children to *be* so that they may *become*. And the last plea is: it will work; it

has worked in Washington County. We must not delude ourselves by stating that economics or poor facilities or inadequate teachers are the reasons why such a program cannot work. This is not true; it is our own inability to think creatively and positively. It is our lack of faith which is the issue. The lack of faith, the courage, and the creative force have been the factors which have kept much of Maine education where it is now.

What Can We Do?

Although it is our right to speak out, it is also our right and obligation to suggest alternatives. This much we know; in general Maine education is not receiving the attention and focus it should to meet the demands being placed upon it. Nor is Maine education preparing to meet the twenty-first century which is rapidly upon us. We know that there are problems, but the problems are not impossible. In fact, most educators will tell us that money is the cure-all. But it is not the cure-all or even the beginning of it. Where money has been spent, it has been spent foolishly and unwisely, for the basic issues still remain. Too, much of what can and should take place does not require money. What is essentially important is the quality of ideas and the implementations of those ideas. In fact, much of what can take place costs nothing except human concern and effort – a price which apparently many of us are not willing to pay. Also essentially important is the ability for us to think beyond what is past and what is now and attempt to think of what might and can be. The reforms which are so urgent for improvement of Maine education is the first reform of cutting through so much of the rot that exists. We need to cut those bureaucratic bonds which tie us all up into tight little balls of inaction.

I urgently suggest that every effort be made to create a task force for the study of Maine education. An essentially important part of the task force would be the inclusion of low-income representation, minority group membership, and parents of children. The hierarchy in education is just too remote from the groups it serves or hopes to serve. Essentially important too would be membership from industry and business in an attempt to discover how we can inter-relate the total resources available and to suggest new possibilities. This task force should be a priority item for Governor Curtis to consider. If the state of Vermont can do it, so can Maine.